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Seventy-second year

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New York

President:	Mr. Llorentty Soliz	(Bolivia (Plurinational State of))
Members:	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Amendola
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mrs. Carrión

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2017/473)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic (S/2017/473)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Central African Republic to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic; Mr. Andrew Gilmour, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights; Mr. Marco Impagliazzo, President of the Community of Sant'Egidio.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Gilmour, who is joining us via video-teleconference from Washington, D.C.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/473, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic.

I now give the floor to Mr. Onanga-Anyanga.

Mr. Onanga-Anyanga (*spoke in French*): Today, the Security Council is considering the Secretary-General's report on the situation in the Central African Republic (S/2017/473).

This meeting is taking place at a very important point in time. It affords us an opportunity to express the international community's concern regarding the Central African Republic and ending the political and security crisis in the country. Armed violence there continues to impact millions of people. It is therefore with a heavy heart that I address the Council today, although there should be no doubt about the strength and determination of our commitment.

Our hearts are heavy and in pain following the recent wave of violence, which has once again caused so much death and destruction by scattering innumerable civilians into exile and homelessness and plunging of many families into mourning. The intensity and premeditated nature of the attacks, as well as the targeting of ethnic and religious minorities, serve to remind us most horribly of the darkest episodes of the political and security crisis in the Central African Republic. However, what is both troubling and revolting is the systematic and relentless aggression against peacekeepers. I stand before the Council today, struck by the indescribable suffering inflicted on civilians, mainly by reason of their identity, and by the repeated attacks on peacekeepers.

I want to address all the victims, be they Central Africans or Blue Helmets, and especially those of the Kingdoms of Cambodia and Morocco. I once again extend to them the heartfelt tribute of the Secretary-General and the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), as well as my own tribute. These painful events clearly demonstrate the depth of the Central African crisis, which reflects the structural shortcomings of the Central African State.

(*spoke in English*)

I would like to give the Council a brief overview of the main developments since the publication of the report. The situation in Bangassou remains extremely precarious. The violence that erupted on 13 May, which was likely carefully planned, progressed in a disturbing fashion. Armed groups backed by political spoilers demonstrated their intention of carrying out a de facto ethnic cleansing of the town. MINUSCA is providing protection to some 17,000 internally displaced persons, 4,000 of whom are Muslims from the Tokoyo neighbourhood of Bangassou. There is also disturbing evidence of systematic targeting of ethnic Fulani. Some among the displaced community are living in deplorable conditions. Meanwhile, nearly 3,000 persons have sought refuge in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The situations in the southern central prefectures of Ouaka and Mbomou remain complex, as reinforcements of the coalition of the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique have been moving in support of the purge of the Unité pour la paix en centrafrique. The unholy alliance with some anti-balaka elements has

created an extremely volatile situation. There has been of targeting Muslim civilians in a number of towns. The end of the African Union Regional Task Force's operations is also a source of major concern, as various armed groups are competing to fill the ensuing vacuum. I also remain deeply concerned about the evolving situation in Bria, where approximately 80 per cent of the civilian population — approximately 4,000 people — have been displaced due to the clashes that began on 16 May. On 25 May, MINUSCA launched an integrated operation to create an environment that enables displaced people to return to their homes. Yet, the situation remains volatile.

Similarly, an outbreak of violence in the north-western prefectures of Ouham and Ouham Pendé, related to armed groups competing for control of lucrative transhumance roads, was averted through a tripartite local mediation initiative at the end of May, with the facilitation of MINUSCA.

The security situation in Bangui remains relatively calm, thanks to continuous and integrated political and military efforts. The joint task force in Bangui has reinforced its positions and conducted several shows of force. Coordination mechanisms between MINUSCA and relevant national defence and internal security institutions have also proven effective. At the same time, the Mission has continued to engage community leaders in support of the Government's efforts to defuse tensions.

Lately, MINUSCA has been under harsh public criticism in the Central African Republic. The accusations are in fact an expression of the frustration over the State's flagrant lack of capacities. It also reflects the population's impatience over the persistent insecurity, which is unfortunately largely self-inflicted. Sadly, much of this criticism mirrors the deep divisions that persist in the country, with each side expecting MINUSCA to fight its perceived enemy. This also shows the need to move quickly with a strong a national reconciliation agenda.

Even in the face of those cynics who would disparage MINUSCA publicly, our resolve remain stronger than ever before. As a result, the Central African Republic is on a path towards incremental peace. If we stay the course, we will come progressively closer to achieving the Mission's end state, but we must recognize that this will not be enough. We are now deeply inside a critical phase of mandate implementation, which is why MINUSCA must stay the course to consolidate progress towards peace, even as we must recognize the magnitude of the adversity we face today.

Within the United Nations, the Secretary-General has directed a redoubling of efforts in order first and foremost to help advance the political process, in combination with enhancing security efforts, increasing international engagement in response to the humanitarian crisis, boosting national reconciliation efforts and ensuring the delivery of peace dividends and a promotion of economic recovery. In this context, all constructive peace efforts need to be energized. The Consultative Follow-up Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation, whose last inclusive meeting took place on 8 and 9 June in Bangui, can provide an essential forum where the Government and armed groups could not only discuss the modalities of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme but also broader issues related to peace and stability in the country.

The African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation remains an essential element for facilitating an inclusive national dialogue with the support of the subregion. Recent contact between the Government and the African Union and other parties are in this regard encouraging. The subregion should continue to play a critical role in ensuring that this mediation progresses and that its outcome contributes to long-term stability in both the subregion and in the Central African Republic.

The ongoing work of the Community of Sant'Egidio could represent a useful contribution to this effort. All concerned Central African parties should seize these opportunities to have discussions in good faith with the legitimate national authorities on concrete steps towards achieving sustainable peace in their country. Meanwhile, violence and the killing of innocent civilians must cease now.

MINUSCA will continue to project a robust posture towards armed groups while investing in structures that build resilience. Nevertheless, we need to be realistic about the degree to which the State may quickly achieve a level of autonomy that allows State institutions to manage by themselves, that is, without significant support. The State is without infrastructure and has limited human capital. Innovative approaches will continue to be needed to ensure stability in the medium term.

MINUSCA is, for its part, applying a fully integrated approach to preventing conflict and sustaining peace, and nowhere is this more visible than in Bambari. The town has remained calm since robust measures described in the report were taken to enable the gradual restoration of State authority, including via close coordination between the Government and the United Nations.

The report before the Council mentions other critical milestones that should not be overlooked, including the successful convening of the Consultative Follow-up Committee, in which all 14 armed groups participated. It is now incumbent upon them to generally embrace the peace process. I congratulate the Central African authorities on the timely establishment of six national institutions, as required by the Constitution, which helps the country avoid a constitutional crisis. I am also pleased to note that the National Assembly has been very productive in terms of legislation while exhibiting vibrant political activity in its first year. The Government has sent signals that it is very eager to see the Special Criminal Court fully operationalized as soon as possible and the Prosecutor of the Court arriving in Bangui on 25 May.

The joint human rights mapping report by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and MINUSCA, covering the period from 2003 to 2015, was launched on 30 May. I am grateful to Assistant Secretary-General Gilmour for his visit to the Central African Republic on this important occasion. The report is an important piece in support of the fight against inpunity and makes critical yet realistic proposals with a view to advancing transitional justice in the Central African Republic. It should be seen as an important contribution to long-term stability and sustainable peace in the country.

(*spoke in French*)

At this critical juncture in the process of establishing a rule of law in a peaceful and reconciled with the United Nations and living in harmony with its neighbours, it is essential that all national and international actors working towards this noble objective speak with one and the same voice. This meeting provides an excellent example of the remarkable momentum of international solidarity that the Central African Republic is enjoying. We already had the illustration last November in Brussels. The European Union, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the African Development Bank, the French Agency for Development and even the International Organization of La Francophonie all have developed programmes with the Central African Government. This unprecedented momentum is the bearer of rich promises. But it will be the responsibility of the Central Africans alone to ensure that they do not waste, but instead make this priceless capital grow, in order to make the legitimate aspirations of the Central African people for greater stability and shared prosperity a reality without further delay.

Mr. President, you will agree with me that the situation is critical and that, if we are not up to the task, the judgment of history will be uncompromising. A national awakening is more essential than ever. A high sense of patriotism and the unity of the Central Africans around the vital strategic objectives contained in the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan are needed. The Framework for Mutual Engagement sets out the terms of the contract of trust between the Central African Republic and its strategic partners. Under the direct authority of President Touadera, the Framework for Mutual Engagement could be a major instrument of coordination and strategic direction to accelerate the implementation of the important reforms desired by the Government.

(*spoke in English*)

I am deeply concerned that the already dire humanitarian situation confronting the country is at risk of worsening if the Central African authorities cannot facilitate the return of displaced people and refugees to their homes. More than half of the Central African population — or 2.2 million people — need assistance or are food insecure. This figure represents the highest per capita caseload in the world and bears restating with ever more urgency.

It is vital that all international partners honour their pledges to the Central African Republic and harmonize that support for consolidating the peace dividends and maintaining a robust posture, which MINUSCA is of course prepared to take, with sufficient resources to enable it to achieve its mandate. Continued engagement with the international peacebuilding architecture in support of the country's stabilization and recovery is also critically important.

To that end, and with the Council's support, I pledge to continue to lead MINUSCA in expanding the limits of what peacekeeping can achieve. The Mission is working closely with United Nations agencies and

investing resources in mechanisms that promote national resilience. MINUSCA is constantly monitoring the volatile and unpredictable security situation with increased anticipation and mobility in positioning its forces to protect civilians and prevent the outbreak of widespread violence. Yet, knowing that there will be no military solution to the current crisis in the Central African Republic, all efforts must be exerted in support of a mediated political solution.

I sincerely thank the Council for recognizing the serious efforts made by MINUSCA to fight and eventually end sexual exploitation and abuse. Improvements in tracking, reporting and coordinating responses to violations are paying off in the form of better assistance to victims and a dramatic reduction in the number of new allegations. Zero tolerance works, but I will not be satisfied until there are zero cases, as well as an end to impunity for those grave abuses, including in troop- and police-contributing countries, or vis-à-vis civilian staff.

(*spoke in French*)

I understand the scope of the task we face and, I must admit that given the relentless evidence of the forces of destruction, it makes sense to think that the cynics feel vindicated, but we must recall the trajectory of the Central African Republic so that we do not get distracted or discouraged. No person or institution alone can succeed, but together there is no doubt that we will so that the Central African Republic can permanently break the vicious circle of conflict and finally, with force and conviction, embrace the greatness commensurate with its rich heritage and immense potential.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Onanga-Anyanga for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Gilmour.

Mr. Gilmour: I am grateful for the opportunity to provide an update on the human rights mapping report in the Central African Republic. The report, which was mandated by the Security Council in July through resolution 2301 (2016), is nearly 400 pages long and covers the major violations and crimes committed in the country from 2003 to 2015. It was launched jointly by the Central African authorities and the United Nations in Bangui two weeks ago. I attended the launch, together with the leadership of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

The objective of the report is to help the Central African Republic authorities and the international community fight impunity for the years of massive abuses in the Central African Republic and prevent the resurgence of conflict. Our aim is also to advance the implementation of MINUSCA's core tasks to develop comprehensive transitional justice mechanisms in line with the 2015 Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation principles, to support the Special Criminal Court, and to help develop national vetting mechanisms for defence and security forces.

By documenting incidents throughout 13 years of multiple conflicts in the Central African Republic, the report constitutes the start of a process of collecting evidence of the violations committed. It details 620 incidents, including horrific accounts of entire villages being burned to the ground; multiple gang rapes of women and girls, extrajudicial killings; deaths following severe torture or ill-treatment in detention centres; serious violence against civilians on the basis of religion, ethnicity or as reprisal for perceived support for other armed groups; the recruitment of thousands of children as child fighters; and attacks on both humanitarian actors and peacekeepers. The vast majority of incidents were attributed to the ex-Séléka and the anti-balaka groups, as well as the Central African defence and security forces.

Unfortunately, some of those abuses appear to be resuming today, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General has so eloquently detailed just now. That is a rather alarming development. It is therefore a timely moment to send an unequivocal message to the perpetrators of such violations — as we did through the mapping report — that their actions are being watched and carefully documented, and that they will be held accountable. During my visit, there was unanimity among the many Central Africans I spoke to regarding their utter rejection of any amnesty for perpetrators of the most serious crimes, which is in line with the principles of the Bangui Forum. Building on the momentum of the report, we hope that some of the perpetrators of the most serious violations will be arrested in the near future, which would demonstrate a true resolve to fighting impunity and is what the Central Africans are vocally demanding of us all, particularly in relation to the big fish, as they are called — those who ordered and carried out the most unspeakable atrocities.

The mapping report provides a set of recommendations to inform the prosecutorial strategy

of the Special Criminal Court, a central mechanism that will help reverse the impunity trend in the Central African Republic. I had an encouraging meeting with Special Prosecutor Muntazini Mukimapa, who recently arrived in my country. The legacy of human rights abuses in the Central African Republic is so vast that judicial mechanisms will obviously not be the only avenue to administer justice. The mapping report also provides guidance for the development of a comprehensive approach to transitional justice, which will help identify the appropriate mechanisms for truth, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence. All of that, we believe, will support reconciliation efforts, given that continued impunity is one of the primary root causes of the ongoing violence.

Finally, the mapping report also highlights essential preconditions that must be met before transitional mechanisms can be functional — measures to protect victims and witnesses and conditions to ensure that all individuals can participate in the process. Human rights defenders and leaders of women's groups and religious communities with whom I met in Bangui and Bambari have been courageously documenting human rights violations with few guarantees of security. Their courage should be matched with support from the United Nations and other international partners.

Beyond transitional mechanisms, institution-building — especially the establishment of the new National Human Rights Commission and the reform of security and defence forces to allow them to carry out their protection responsibilities — are key priorities in that regard. We are encouraged by the support of partners, particularly the African Union and the European Union in that respect.

As my visit to the severely overcrowded Ngaragba prison in Bangui made clear, rule-of-law infrastructure requires increased capacity, and prisons must be constructed and run in a more humane manner and with adequate food. That is not the case at present, a matter that I raised with the Prime Minister. While police, justice and corrections officials have begun to deploy in several parts of the country, they continue to lack many of the resources necessary to carrying out their functions. I believe we must step up efforts to build the capacity of police, justice and corrections authorities, especially in the areas most affected by the conflict. Re-establishing such services is crucial if we are to avoid fuelling further resentment.

In order to build on the positive momentum that the launch of the Mapping report has created, I really hope that the Council can support the Central Africans and MINUSCA's incredible efforts in such truly difficult circumstances by providing the means to implement its mandate to protect civilians, fight impunity and support institution-building, without which we simply cannot succeed in our common goals.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Gilmour for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Impagliazzo.

Mr. Impagliazzo (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank you, Mr. President, for your invitation to address the Security Council.

The Community of Sant'Egidio, over which I have the honour of presiding and which is an advisory member of the Economic and Social Council — is an international institution that is present in more than 70 countries and has long experience in mediation and dialogue for peace all over the world, especially in Africa, starting with the General Peace Accords for Mozambique, signed in Rome 25 years ago in 1992. Sant'Egidio is itself partly African, since it has several thousand members in some 30 African countries. We have an exceptional long-standing relationship with the United Nations, with whom we have just signed an agreement in the form of an exchange of letters of intent to strengthen our collaboration in the areas of peace, conflict prevention and crisis stabilization.

The Central African Republic is a priority for Sant'Egidio, which has been involved with the country since 2003, in the promotion of peace and dialogue among its various components. I would like to briefly mention our recent initiatives, such as the November 2013 republican pact, which the Council described in resolution 2127 (2013) as

> "a credible framework to promote an inclusive national dialogue between all political, social and religious parties of the country" (*resolution 2127 (2013), para. 7*).

The Council went on to request the transitional authorities to implement it.

In line with the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, that initiative aimed to extend the authority of the State, maintain its territorial

integrity and foster the promotion and protection of human rights as well as disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR). Moreover, in 2014, Sant'Egidio worked to foster dialogue between religious communities, in particular to end the isolation to which the Muslim community was subjected after the fall of the Séléka regime. During 2015, an awareness-raising campaign was carried out for the political forces to support the electoral process and to encourage the acceptance of the election results. Sant'Egidio also facilitated Pope Francis' visit to Bangui in November 2015, and, in particular his meeting with representatives of the armed groups present in the capital at the time, by asking them to voluntarily strengthen security in the neighbourhoods that the Pope was scheduled to visit. As noted, that visit had a strong positive impact on the stability of the country and on ending the isolation of the Muslim community, and a new impetus was given to the process of national reconciliation.

Since President Touadéra's election in January 2016, all of Sant'Egidio's efforts have been aimed at enabling the democratically elected authorities to exercise their mandate throughout the country. In that regard, since November 2016, with the authorization of the Head of State of the Central African Republic, and while informing Special Representative of the Secretary-General Onanga-Anyanga, at every stage — whom I would like to commend and thank for his interesting briefing — representatives of the 14 armed groups visited Rome at various times — both those who had joined the DDRR process and those who opted out, in particular the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC).

The meetings remained confidential and did not encroach on the other consultations under way. It should be noted that sanctions were not imposed on any of the participants in the meeting in Sant'Egidio between representatives of the FPRC and the Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique fighting for control of Bria. In some cases, the Government of the Central African Republic itself facilitated the travel of representatives to such meetings, which are supposed to assist, support and complement the efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic and its President.

That endeavour spawned a positive dynamic. In the coming days, Sant'Egidio intends to bring together representatives of all 14 armed groups and envoys of the Central African Government tasked by President Touadéra to analyse the critical points of the DDRR process and the political dialogue. Special Representative of the Secretary-General Onanga-Anyanga will also be present at that meeting. It is through those meetings that the international community will be able to reap the benefits of efforts that are confidential and that are compatible with and complement other ongoing initiatives that can finalize the ceasefire and ensure that all groups take part in the DDRR process. It will be possible to work on critical points on the issue of transitional justice and on guarantees governing the access and protection of humanitarians, in accordance with the mandate of the United Nations in the Central African Republic.

Based on our experience, we believe that, first, direct dialogue between the presidency and its Government, on one hand, and the representatives of the armed groups, on the other, is absolutely necessary and a part of African ownership of the process. In that regard, the full implementation of the African mediation initiative could further assist in advancing that process.

Secondly, reaching consensus on the final terms of DDRR, restoring sovereign functions to the State and ending the isolation of institutional actors are absolutely urgent, in particular following the spate of violence in recent weeks.

To that end, the aim of the meetings is to help to rebuild trust among Central Africans, in particular non-institutional actors — the armed groups. Our experience in the field and our methods of complementarity, confidentiality, flexibility and direct dialogue have met with proven success. As underscored last Friday by Under-Secretary-General Jeffrey Feltman, over the years, Sant'Egidio has demonstrated

> "its ability to bring non-governmental actors and, in particular armed groups to the negotiating table".

Finally, this exercise could help break the deadlock in the national dialogue and accelerate United Nations operations as a whole.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Impagliazzo for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Amendola (Italy): First of all, I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Onanga-Anyanga for his comprehensive briefing. We commend the United Nations Multidimensional

Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic for its tireless efforts in halting violence and protecting civilians. Its strong position against the armed groups prevented them from further expanding their control over the majority of the country. I would also like to seize this opportunity to reiterate our condolences on the loss suffered by the Mission.

I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Gilmour for his briefing. We welcome the United Nations mapping project documenting serious violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human rights committed in the country from 2003 to 2015. That could become an important tool for the special criminal court, which we hope will soon be fully operational.

Italy is concerned about the significant deterioration of the security situation in the country. Over the past few months, it has had a severe impact on the civilian population. It risks derailing the progress achieved over the past year. In that fragile security environment, the already dramatic humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate, with increasing numbers of newly displaced people and refugees.

The worsening security situation in the country proves that the political process is not moving forward. It is positive that the meeting held in Bangui in April of the Consultative Follow-up Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation was attended by representatives of all 14 armed groups. Nonetheless, it seems that that platform is not sufficient to stop the fighting. That is the reason that other actors have stepped in to support and complement the reconciliation process led by President Touadéra. In that regard, we welcome and commend the efforts led by Sant'Egidio, on which President Marco Impagliazzo just briefed the Council. The commitment and the process in which Sant'Egidio is involved is for us a secure point of reference for the political decision-making process.

We remain fully supportive of the African mediation initiative and we hope that in the coming weeks the African Union will be able to put in place a road map to which the Council could give voice its support. Italy believes that that is the key to ensuring close coordination of the various initiatives, bearing in mind that President Touadéra, who was democratically elected by the people last year, must remain the pivot of the Central African political scene. We therefore call on the authorities, on one side, and all the armed groups, on the other side, to step up their efforts and address the root causes of the conflict. For its part, the international community has to concretely and significantly help the Central African Government in the different sectors. In that regard, we welcome the action plan of the Secretary-General and fully support the priorities outlined by Special Representative Onanga-Anyanga.

Italy remains an active player in the humanitarian development sector through its development cooperation and supports the pledges made at the Brussels Conference. We hope that all the relevant parties will swiftly proceed with creating the conditions for pledges made at the Brussels Conference to be eventually turned into reality. In that regard, just a few days ago, the European Union and the Government of the Central African Republic signed a programme of support for the Central African Republic worth €302 million over the 2014-2020 period, by which the European Union showed a clear commitment to stepping up its support for the authorities and the people of the country.

The European Union also plays a major role in complementing the efforts of MINUSCA on the ground. The European Union's Military Training Mission in the country is providing an invaluable contribution to security sector reform. In fact, it has just completed the training of the first battalion of the Central African Republic armed forces. But any kind of international support and any discussion on the priorities for the future of the country could prove to be useless without a real political agreement, as our friends mentioned before in their briefings.

At this critical juncture for the history of the country, the Central African Republic should make an effort in the direction of long-lasting peace.

Mrs. Carrión (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, at the outset, to thank Mr. Gilmour, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga and Mr. Impagliazzo for their briefings.

The Central African Republic has swung between consolidating the achievements made since the election of President Touadéra, in particular the recent headway made in Bangui and Bambari, and a serious deterioration in humanitarian and security conditions in other parts of the country, including deadly attacks against the staff of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). On the latter point, we are deeply concerned about the threats against Mission staff

and the number of incidents that directly affected them. The security of MINUSCA staff should be at the centre of our attention. I also want to point out that attacks against Blue Helmets could constitute war crimes and that the perpetrators must be held accountable before the courts.

The complex state of affairs in the country reflects the many challenges that lie before the Government of the Central African Republic, in particular with regard to the development of solid national institutions and the expansion of State authority throughout the entire country. Uruguay acknowledges that the efforts made by President Touadéra and his Government in the first year of his term have paved the way for considerable progress to be made, including the establishment of various national institutions, as required under the Constitution, and headway in the ongoing dialogue with the various armed groups. With regard to that issue, we would like to underscore the convening, on 20 and 21 April, of the fourth meeting of the Consultative Follow-up Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation, in which the 14 main armed groups participated. We encourage all armed groups to engage with the dialogue process and to use the platform to voice their claims in a peaceful way.

It is essential that the international community continue to nurture and support the efforts of the Government of the Central African Republic to achieve peace and stability in the country. By the same token, the action of the international community at the Brussels Conference in November 2016 constituted a clear expression of international solidarity and a commitment to learning from the lessons of the past and to not giving up. In recent months, a number of initiatives to support the peace process have taken place, including the African initiative, led by the African Union and other subregional organizations, as well as the efforts of the Community of Sant'Egidio. In that regard, for any effort to be successful, proper consultations must be held with the Government and should aim at complementing the measures that are already being made by national authorities in the search for reconciliation and peace in the country.

The implementation of MINUSCA's sexual exploitation and abuse action plan has been successful, with a decrease in the number of cases recorded. However, there is still a lot to be done in order to weed out the scourge once and for all. Uruguay reiterates its support for the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.

In conclusion, allow me to convey my greetings to all MINUSCA staff, who day in and day out play a key role in the country. I would also like to pay tribute to the six Blue Helmets who died the line of duty as a result of cowardly attacks, which we vigorously condemn.

Mr. Ilichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, for his briefing. We also thank Mr. Andrew Gilmour and the representative of the Community of Sant'Egidio.

We share the concerns about the continuing instability in the Central African Republic, especially in the area of security. As we can see, intercommunal strife continues in the country. Criminality and banditry are widespread. There are bloody clashes taking place on religious and ethnic grounds. Intense skirmishes between armed groups continue as they fight over territory, key trade routes and resources. The situation is further complicated by the fact that State administration and security bodies are either paralysed or simply absent in many parts of the country. As was the case before, Bangui is the only island of tranquillity in the country. Clashes between non-State armed groups in the central and eastern regions of the country and insurgents' attacks on civilians and humanitarian personnel and peacekeepers not only undermine the security situation, but also impede national reconciliation.

Clearly, given such a complex military and political situation in the Central African Republic, the stabilizing role of the United Nations peacekeeping Mission cannot be overemphasized. Blue Helmets, who put their own lives at risk, are trying to put out the flames engulfing the country. We pay tribute to their heroism and their determination to help the people of the Central African Republic and to achieve peace.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that, in confronting the challenges facing the country, the Administration of President Touadéra has so far not been able to count on its own armed forces, which in fact exist on paper only. Two battalions made up of 1,500 troops will conclude their training at the end of 2017. It will take years for reliable armed forces to form in the country. The international community must pay attention to the need to strengthen the capability of

the Central African army in order to achieve lasting security in the country.

In addition, we would like to point out the need to balance the due diligence policy in the area of human rights with supporting the security sector of the Central African Republic. The task of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic is to help stabilize the country. However, without urgent reforms, the Blue Helmets will not be able to transfer responsibility to the armed forces of the country. The peacekeepers in the Central African Republic will not be there forever. We must remember that.

We are concerned about the further deterioration in the social, economic and humanitarian situation in the country and the continuing severe lack of financing for humanitarian needs. Today, the country faces another problem in the humanitarian sphere, namely, illegal armed groups who continue to attack humanitarian workers. Last year, 31 per cent of such attacks throughout the world took place in the Central African Republic. We call on all parties to the conflict to ensure unimpeded humanitarian access on the ground. On their part, the authorities should create conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes.

The Central African Republic authorities have the overarching task of getting the country's judicial bodies to function. In the circumstances it will be essential to focus on restoring national capacity. The use by peacekeepers of temporary emergency measures and the protracted process of establishing a special criminal court do not constitute a panacea for the country's problems where combating impunity is concerned. After almost two years this institution is still not functioning, and there have been serious problems with its financing. On top of that, the global experience has been that various types of courts involving international participation have generally been relatively ineffective and very costly.

We would also like to draw attention to the fact that one of the demands of the armed groups regarding a general amnesty is meeting with hostility not only from the Government — thereby delaying the national dialogue — but also from many international stakeholders. In that regard, we urge Bangui not to rush into a final decision. After all, amnesty does not imply impunity, and a promise to grant it does not devalue the achievements of the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation in 2015. If we are to advance the process of reconciliation and the healing of wounds, it is essential to ensure that all the parties are motivated to participate. If not, we run the risk of the conflict continuing for years.

The Central African Republic needs major reforms and modernization in every area of life. The process of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation must receive extra impetus, which can be achieved only with international assistance and, most important, regional and subregional mediation. In that connection, we note the mediation efforts of the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States. However, it is clear that the potential for stronger regional support for the country's national dialogue is far from being fulfilled. As we have seen from other examples of successful conflict management in Africa, it is regional mediation that to a great degree has a defining role to play in encouraging the parties to conflicts to undertake direct dialogue.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

Bolivia would like to thank Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, for his briefing. We also thank Mr. Andrew Gilmour, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, and Mr. Marco Impagliazzo, President of the Community of Sant'Egidio, for their valuable participation.

We are concerned about the continuing violence perpetrated by armed groups in the Central African Republic, which affects not just the parties directly involved in the conflict but is also seriously harmful to the civilian population, in particular those who are most vulnerable, including women and children. It is also making the humanitarian situation even worse. In that regard, Bolivia condemns the attacks by armed groups on civilians and on the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). We acknowledge the difficult challenges that the country is facing in the process of restoring stability, which must be achieved through inclusive dialogue and serious, sustained commitment from the parties to the conflict.

We deeply regret the deaths of MINUSCA personnel and citizens of the Central African Republic that have

occurred as a result of the violence. We commend the work of the men and women of MINUSCA, who are fulfilling their mandate in a hostile and unstable environment. We also firmly condemn any sexual exploitation or abuse by any of the parties to the conflict, including Mission personnel. Bolivia demands that anyone accused of sexual exploitation be duly investigated by the appropriate authorities and prosecuted in accordance with the seriousness of the crime, in order to ensure that such violence does not go unpunished.

The violence in the Central African Republic has had serious humanitarian consequences. According to information provided by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, approximately 50 per cent of the population has been affected by clashes between armed groups. One in four health-care facilities have been destroyed and two out of three people have no access to health services. Food insecurity affects one in four people and a disturbing total of 2 million are now at risk. One in five people have also been forcibly displaced. In April alone more than 40,000 people were internally displaced as a result of the violence in the north-eastern and south-eastern regions of the country. According to the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2017/473) the total number of displaced persons increased from 401,000 in February to 426,000 in March. Violations of international human rights law and humanitarian law have exacerbated the situation. Hundreds of men, women and children have become victims of sexual violence, human trafficking or arbitrary arrest or detention. Bolivia urges all armed groups to lay down their weapons. We call on all the parties to the conflict to set aside their sectarian interests, whatever they are, in order to avoid creating obstacles to productive dialogue and to enable them to build on efforts to restore stability to the country.

In view of the difficult period that the Central African Republic is going through, which can only get worse if instability continues and peace is not established, we urge the international community to contribute to the support needed for the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process for former combatants. We welcome the efforts of regional organizations, including the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, as well as of neighbouring countries and the Community of Sant'Egidio, which will continue to be crucial to supporting the political initiatives for peace and cooperation aimed at a lasting reconciliation process through African solutions for Africans, in full respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Central African Republic. We also support the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan and the Framework for Mutual Engagement between the Central African Government and the international community.

In conclusion, we believe that we must continue to help to lay the foundation for lasting stability in the Central African Republic and to support all relevant initiatives, with the full and committed support and agreement of the international community, based on respect for the law, justice, reconciliation and peace.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Central African Republic.

Ms. Kpongo (Central African Republic) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to commend the Bolivian presidency for conducting the work of the Security Council during its busy programme for the month of June. I commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his briefing today, all of whose points my delegation fully endorses. I also thank the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights for his briefing and the President of the Community of Sant'Egidio for all the work it is doing in the Central African Republic.

The Secretary-General's comprehensive and detailed report (S/2017/473) makes for disturbing reading with regard to the violent clashes between armed groups that have led to the serious deterioration of security conditions and have once again led to panic and the displacement of populations in most of the prefectures where those groups hold sway. We are concerned because the reach of these armed groups extends throughout our territory.

What can we add to everything that has been described in the report? I believe that it is in all of our interests, especially the Security Council's, to support the concrete and important work that the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) is doing under the leadership of Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga. My delegation acknowledges all the support

that the Council has given our Government in its efforts to find all possible ways and means to restore peace in the Central African Republic.

Despite the increased presence of MINUSCA in the field to deter rabble-rousers, the situation remains a matter of concern. Armed groups have overtaken the entire territory. Areas that were previously spared are being deliberately attacked by these groups. Mission convoys, international forces and civilians are targeted. I offer my deepest sympathies to the brotherly and friendly countries that provide the contingents whose members have been savagely murdered or wounded. We reiterate our sincere condolences to the Governments and families of all these brave soldiers who, in saving lives, have lost their own. We thank them for their dedication to the cause of peace in an extremely dangerous, complex and difficult context. Attacks on civilians for any reason are not only unacceptable but intolerable.

I welcome the initiative of the African Union Peace and Security Council to ask the Security Council to include the issue of the disarmament of the Lord's Resistance Army in the mandate of MINUSCA. To that end, it would be highly desirable for the Mission's military strength, which currently stands at 10,471 men, with an authorized strength of 10,750, to be increased, alongside that of the police forces, to address that new task if it is approved.

Apart from all that MINUSCA has already done in the area of security, with a dynamic and muscular posture, it is time to endow it with even greater resources in order to meet the threat posed by armed groups. The presence of armed groups complicates the search for peace. I agree with the Secretary-General that we must give priority to the search for a political solution. It is in that sense that the President of the Republic continues to promote dialogue with armed groups through the vigorous action of MINUSCA that led to the participation of 14 armed groups on 14 April in the Consultative Follow-up Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation.

In his speech at the opening of the 4th meeting of the Committee, the Head of State proposed three key points to the participants. He told them that the killings must cease, that frank dialogue must be engaged on all issues of concern, and how the dialogue should be convened. It was in that context that His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadéra accepted the offer of the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to endorse the African initiative for peace and reconciliation in the Central African Republic. The support of Angola, the Republic of Congo and the Republic of Chad, as well as that of international partners — in particular the United Nations, the European Union and the International Organization of la Francophonie — are of vital importance to the search for lasting peace.

Too many crimes have been committed and continue to be committed in the Central African Republic, and the parents of the victims expect justice to be done. They are waiting for the Government to act. They also look to the United Nations and the international community. Efforts to combat impunity continue thanks to the progress made towards the operationalization of the Special Criminal Court. It is gradually being set up with the appointment of most of its members. We urge brotherly and friendly countries to help us appointing the judges it still lacks.

There is one not insignificant point that I should like to bring to the attention of the Council concerning the rapid impact projects or programmes initiated by MINUSCA, such as training centres, work-for-pay programmes, income-generating projects, and so on. It is essential to make the most of all these programmes, which will employ young people who are idle and at risk of being recruited by or returning to armed groups. Unfortunately, some delegations in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly would like to see the end of funding in the MINUSCA budget for these programmes.

I cannot conclude my remarks without expressing my sincere gratitude to the Special Representative and Head of MINUSCA and the Force Commander for their determination to carry out the mission entrusted to them — that of restoring peace in my country. Their courage is a comfort to the people who have been plagued by this interminable crisis. I welcome the excellent cooperation and understanding between the Government and MINUSCA on all issues involving the search for an end to the crisis. I pay tribute to all the men and women who participate in the Mission. I cannot fail to mention the role played in the subregion by Mr. François Louncény Fall, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, in support of the Central African Republic.

I agree with the Secretary-General that time is of the essence if we want to avoid another relapse in tne Central African Republic, as many already foresee. I would therefore like to thank the international community; all the bilateral and multilateral partners of the Central African Republic that made pledges at the Brussels Conference, especially those that increased their announced pledges; as well as those that were not in Brussels and subsequently decided to support the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan. We do not take for granted the ongoing financial support of the Peacebuilding Fund in many projects. The Government and the people of the Central African Republic express their deep appreciation to them.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.